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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 009280

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [KMPI](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: GOJ DIPS IN PUBLIC APPROVAL RATING

REF: A. AMMAN 08794

[B](#). AMMAN 05725

Classified By: Charge d'affaires a.i. David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) According to a late October public opinion poll, only 16.8% of Jordanians believed that the government would be greatly successful in achieving its priorities, down from 23.3% of those surveyed four months earlier (ref b). Asked about the October 25 Cabinet reshuffle, 58% of Jordanians thought it would improve the government's performance. Officials hope that recent moves toward launching a much publicized administrative reform program will boost the public's confidence in the government. End Summary.

DOWNWARD SLIDE

[1](#)2. (U) A poll conducted between October 28 and November 1 by the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), a think-tank affiliated with the University of Jordan, showed a noticeable drop in public opinion of the government's performance. Approximately one year after the formation of Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez's first Cabinet, only 16.8% of a national sample of 1,410 Jordanians thought that the government was able to "shoulder its responsibilities to a great extent," compared to 23.3% surveyed by CSS after the government had been in office 200 days (ref b). Among Jordanian "opinion leaders" (including prominent journalists, academics, business leaders, and heads of professional associations), this percentage decreased even more markedly, from 31.8% to 19.6% over the same time period.

[1](#)3. (U) Rating the government's progress on specific tasks, both the national sample and opinion leaders gave relatively high approval ratings for GOJ attention to strengthening women's role in society (80.8% and 70.2% respectively), activating the role of the private sector in the economy (73.5% and 56.1%), increasing the level of investment (67.8% and 64.4%), and managing foreign policy (69.5% and 57.8%). Each of these figures, however, was lower than the corresponding percentages in the previous CSS poll. Opinions on other government priorities were more negative. Only 33.1% of the national sample and 29.9% of opinion leaders thought the government had made progress on reducing poverty, while 29.1% and 34.8%, respectively, saw positive movement in lowering unemployment. Approximately 29% of both groups believed the government would achieve a modern political parties law, although higher numbers -- 36.9% and 50.4%, respectively -- thought the GOJ would complete a "modern" electoral law.

[1](#)4. (U) The CSS poll also included questions on the reshuffled Cabinet announced October 25 (ref a). Among the national sample, 58% said the new Cabinet would improve the government's performance. Opinion leaders were less optimistic, with 45% responding that the reshuffle would result in better government performance.

[1](#)5. (U) Dr. Fares Braizat, head of the CSS polling unit, told the press that the drop in the government's approval rating was "expected." According to Braizat, the 21 polls conducted since 1996 on government performance showed a pattern of public opinion dropping after the first 100 days of a government being in office. Although ratings for PM Fayez and his team were actually higher after 200 days than after the first 100 days, this was an anomaly, said Braizat, caused by several one-time factors (see ref b). He noted that in another recent CSS poll, Jordanians listed corruption, unemployment, and poverty as the top three priorities for the government. "The important issue in these areas is that the government is not being perceived as successful, and the people's confidence in the government's ability to tackle these issues is low," Braizat added.

LAUNCHING PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

16. (U) Hoping to brighten the public's perception of the government, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Government Performance Marwan Muasher told the press November 3 that there was "no going back" on administrative reforms and that after conducting studies, it was now "time for implementation." He said the reform program would revamp the public sector according to four main principles: developing mechanisms to achieve concrete results, ensuring accountability, decentralizing decision making, and guaranteeing good utilization of financial resources. Muasher said the GOJ would prepare over a period of eight months a "national agenda," in cooperation with a large number of public and private sector institutions, to define Jordan's economic, social and political shape for the coming 10 years.

17. (U) As part of the administrative reform program, representatives from 13 ministries participated in a capacity building workshop on November 10-11 co-sponsored by the GOJ and the World Bank. The workshop sought to teach government employees how to design and build a results-based monitoring and evaluation system. According to World Bank expert Ray Rist, who led the workshop, "Jordan is poised for a dramatic breakthrough" in public sector reform. He and other analysts, however, noted several obstacles to progress, including centralization of decision making, a focus on technical issues and strategies rather than achieving results, and inefficient distribution of both human and financial resources.

COMMENT

18. (C) As the CSS poll demonstrates, Jordanians will continue to lose confidence in the government if it does not make progress in the three areas the public cares about most: poverty, unemployment and corruption. While public sector reform is clearly a laudable goal that should help improve the business climate and control graft, it cannot be an alternative for GOJ action on economic and political reform.

19. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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